



AGENDA REPORT

City Council Meeting

TODAY'S DATE: April 27, 2026

MEETING DATE: June 3, 2026

TO: Mayor Grimm, City Council members

FROM: Jason Welker, Planning and Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Parks and Right of Ways Pesticide/Herbicide Policy – *action item*

Requested Council Action

Adopt the City of Sandpoint Parks, Building, and Grounds Division Pesticide/Herbicide Application Policy establishing standards for the use and application of herbicides and pesticides in parks, rights-of-way, and City-maintained facilities.

Background

At the April 1, 2026 City Council meeting, Council considered a staff report requesting direction on whether to develop a formal policy governing the use of pesticides and herbicides by Parks and Right-of-Way maintenance staff. Approval of that item, which was placed on the consent calendar, constituted formal direction to staff to prepare a draft policy and return to Council at a future meeting for consideration.

In response to that direction, staff has prepared the attached Parks, Building, and Grounds Division Pesticide/Herbicide Application Policy for Council review and potential adoption.

Discussion

City Parks and maintenance crews currently rely on a combination of mechanical, cultural, and limited chemical methods to manage vegetation and occasional pest issues. While chemical applications have historically been used in a targeted and restrained manner, these practices have not been governed by a formally adopted policy. The absence of a Council-adopted framework has meant that standards related to application locations, environmental protections, and public notification have been guided by internal practice and product labeling requirements rather than codified direction.

The proposed policy is intended to establish clear, consistent, and transparent standards for chemical use across City-maintained properties. It formalizes the City's current operational approach, which emphasizes limited and targeted application, while introducing additional safeguards and accountability measures.

Under the proposed policy, herbicide use is restricted to specific non-turf areas such as pavers, planter beds, gravel areas, and ballfield infields where weeds cannot be effectively managed through mechanical means alone. The policy explicitly prohibits herbicide use in turf areas, including park lawns and sports fields, as well as in areas of active recreation. In addition, herbicide use is restricted in transitional areas such as fence lines or around tree bases where those areas are adjacent to turf, requiring that those locations be maintained through non-chemical methods.

The policy also addresses pesticide use beyond herbicides, reflecting current operational practices. Pesticide applications are expected to be infrequent and are generally limited to interior building spaces, building perimeters, and utility chases where pest control cannot be achieved through non-chemical methods. The policy prohibits pesticide use in turf and recreation areas, reinforcing a consistent approach to minimizing public exposure.

A significant component of the policy is the inclusion of enhanced environmental protection standards. The policy prohibits any application within waterways, wetlands, or surface waters and establishes a minimum buffer of twenty-five feet from such features, with the expectation that greater setbacks will be used where site conditions increase the risk of drift or runoff. Additional provisions require staff to avoid applications near stormwater infrastructure and to follow best management practices designed to prevent off-target movement of chemicals. These measures are intended to protect water quality and sensitive environmental areas, particularly in proximity to Sand Creek, Lake Pend Oreille, and associated drainage systems.

The policy further strengthens operational controls by requiring that applications only occur under appropriate weather conditions, including the absence of wind, precipitation, or surface moisture that could contribute to drift or runoff. It also requires advance public notice prior to herbicide applications, temporary closure of treated areas during application, and restricted access until treated surfaces have dried.

Finally, the policy incorporates an integrated pest management approach that prioritizes non-chemical methods such as mechanical removal and preventative maintenance. Chemical controls are positioned as a last resort when other methods are ineffective or impractical. The policy also reinforces compliance with EPA-approved product labels, requires that applications be conducted by trained personnel, and establishes recordkeeping requirements to support transparency and accountability.

Policy Considerations

The proposed policy reflects a conservative approach to chemical use in public spaces and is consistent with practices already largely followed by City staff. It provides clearer direction, strengthens environmental protections, and improves transparency without significantly altering current operations. By establishing defined limitations and procedures, the policy also reduces potential liability and provides a defensible framework for decision-making.

Fiscal Impact

There is no significant direct fiscal impact associated with adoption of this policy. Minor administrative requirements related to public notification, recordkeeping, and staff training are expected to be absorbed within existing operational budgets.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that Council adopt the Parks, Building, and Grounds Division Pesticide/Herbicide Application Policy as presented.

Attachments

- Parks, Building, and Grounds Division Pesticide/Herbicide Application Policy